

by Bob Saydowski, Jr.

Pearl Extender

Over a century ago, Dresden tympani appeared with an extended-head principle that produced more volume and resonance. Pearl has now applied that concept to a drum kit.

The new *Extender* Series utilizes the extended-collar design on the toms and snare drum. The batter head is one inch larger than the shell diameter, and slopes down to an oversized rim.

The components in the kit tested are: 14 x 22 bass drum, 8 x 12/13 tom-tom, 9 x 13/14 tom-tom, 15 x 15/16 floor tom, 8 x 14/15 snare drum, and 900 Series hardware. All the drums have 8-ply maple shells, and are built in the USA.

The bass drum is conventional, having 20 lugs with T-style rods, cast claws and maple hoops. The wooden hoops come standard with wood-finished bass drums only. Unfortunately, some makes of drum pedals do not fit on the hoop comfortably; their linkage strap rubs against the batter head. Pearl should consider widening the batter hoop a little bit. A felt strip damper is installed behind the batter head. Each bass drum spur plate is notched in two places: to lock the spurs flush to the drum for packing; and for set-up, to lock them at a slight forward angle. The spur tube contains an inner leg which telescopes for height. At the end of each leg is a rubber tip which can be threaded up to expose a steel spike tip. The spurs hold the bass drum in place very well with no forward "skating."

This drum has two ventholes—one at the top and one at the bottom. Fitted with coated *Ambassador* heads, the drum had nice resonance and ample volume. Single-headed, it produced good punch for that "modern" sound. For rock playing though, a *Pinstripe* or an *Evans Hydraulic* might make for a more contained sound.

Pearl's 77 *Vari-Set* tom-tom holder is mounted on the bass drum. A large chromed block is mounted towards the front of the shell. The receiver holes in the base block are split in half with a half-section indirect clamp—drum-key operated on one side, a T-bolt on the other. The tom-tom arms are tubular steel with cast circular boss joints. Angle adjustment on the arms is similar to Pearl's cymbal tilter concept: no ratchet teeth, but an inner "drum" locked by a single square-head screw atop each arm. Each tom-tom arm passes through its own hole in the base block, and has a memory lock ring for securing height, as well as a memory ring on the other end for locking drum distance/lateral angle. Almost every conceivable angle can be selected with the *Vari-Set* holder, and *nothing* will move once the locks are in place.

Two 903 cymbal stands are included with this kit. They have sturdy tripod bases and two adjustable height stages. Like the *Vari-Set* holder, the tiers are secured by indirect clamping, but without the memory locks. The tillers oper-

ate on the rotating "drum" principle. Any angle is obtainable in a 175° radius. Atop the tilter is a "cymbal stabilizer." This replaces all of the usual washers and sleeves. The base piece is nylon, disc-shaped with a molded-in sleeve. A nylon donut fits tight on top of the sleeve to keep the cymbal from moving about excessively. All 900 Series stands will take Pearl's AX-3 adaptors, allowing one to add on cymbal booms, tom-tom arms, etc.

The 900 hi-hat has a sandblasted two-piece footboard and double parallel springs. Action is a double-pull system with spring tension conveniently adjusted at the top of each external spring tube. Linkage is done with a flat piece of nylon. The stand has a single tripod base, fitted with a *Vari-Set* memory lock on the height tube. Pearl incorporates a unique spur system on the 900. Connected to each leg is a rotating tip; one end with rubber, the other with a metal point. A drum-key-operated screw holds the tip assembly, and, when loosened, allows the tip to be changed from rubber to spike. The 900 remains very stable. It has a quiet, easy action and different tensions are available with a minimum of turns.

A special snare stand is made to accommodate the 8" drum. The 906D has a single-braced tripod base, swivel wing-bolt angle adjustment, and a threaded tightening nut. To set the deep snare drum at a comfortable playing level, the

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basket has been adapted in reverse. The main connector is at the top of the basket, rather than the bottom. It works on the same principle as all other stands with this type of clamping. The 906D has the split *Vari-Set* tier clamp, but no memory lock. It holds the drum secure, and is ideal for deep snare drums.

Pearl's 910 pedal has been re-introduced into their line. It is available as an option with kits, or can be bought separately. The 910 has a sandblasted two-piece footboard with an adjustable/removable toe stop (as does the hi-hat). The footboard may be positioned in any of three lengths away from the framework via rod arms locating into holes at the base. Underneath the heel is a piece of ribbed rubber to help combat skidding. Linkage is a flexible strap with two pieces of soft leather with a nylon layer in between. Encased at the top right of the frame is a compression spring, extending upward. A knurled knob atop the casing adjusts tension, and an adjustment scale is cut into the casing for use as a reference point. The pedal has two knurled knob spring spurs at its base, and clamps to the drum hoop using a one-touch cam clamp lever. When the stick-shift-type lever is pulled towards the player, the clamp plate falls to the hoop, locking the pedal down. To compensate for different hoop thicknesses, the clamp plate has a knob screw that lowers a cast block to "fatten" the plate. The 910 comes with a felt beater, set in height by a T-screw. One minor problem

is that this screw gets in the way of the strap a little bit, making it uncomfortable to tighten. The Pearl 910 is strong and positive, and has a quite efficient action to it. Its clamping system is one of the best and is easy to use.

The 12" *Extender* tom-tom has 12 lugs, a 12" bottom head, and a 13" batter head and hoop. The 13" drum has 12 lugs, a 13" bottom head, and a 14" batter head. The 15" floor tom has 16 lugs, a 15" bottom, and a 16" batter. All the drums have internal mufflers and *two* ventholes—one near the center of the shell, the other at the bottom of the opposite side. These help quicken the outflow of air. Because of the enlarged hoop size, the top tension casings on each drum are a bit lower than usual. They are built up underneath on hard black plastic spacers to allow rod entrance at a straight angle. The mounted toms are fitted with *BT-1 Vari-Set* receivers. Again, these operate on indirect clamping, and the tom-tom arm protrudes the shell. The floor tom has three legs, knurled at their top halves, and set in place by a T-bolt and bracket.

The toms were all fitted with Remo transparent *Ambassadors*, top and bottom. Pearl's claim that the new *Extenders* have increased resonance, pitch clarity and volume is true. The design allows for a low pitch with a tighter head tension than normal. With both heads tensioned the same, resonance is at its fullest. By changing the tension of the bottom head, the resonance can be damped. Due to the extended hoop,

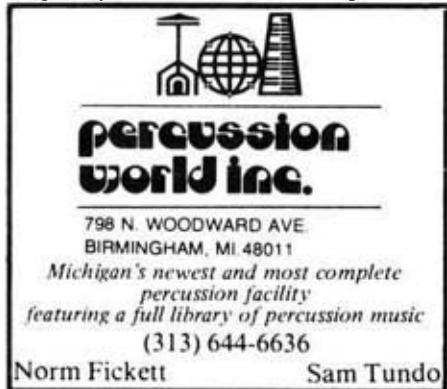
external clip-on mufflers will not work. Perhaps Pearl will devise a muffler for the advocates of external dampening.

The 8 x 14 snare drum has 20 separate lugs, an internal muffler, and two vent-holes, both located at the bottom. The batter side was fitted with a 15" coated *Ambassador*, while the bottom has a standard 14" head. This drum came with Pearl's S-015 center-throw strainer. I would like to see it with the new *X-l* parallel strainer, since the *X-l* gives more even response. The drum sounded full, with perhaps a bit too much ring. Pearl's internal mufflers just don't seem to work well. On this drum, the muffler was tightened all the way and seemed to bind up, without muffling the drum. The *Extender* concept works on the snare, but maybe not as well as on the tom-toms.

The kit was finished in Pearl's new Natural Maple wood, a genuine veneer. All the drums look great and there are no finish defects anywhere. Pearl offers a total of 16 finishes: four woods, and twelve plastic coverings. All logo badges now include serial numbers.

Extender toms are currently available in nine sizes, including "power tom" sizes, all double or single-headed.

The drums list separately at \$1352; the hardware at \$545, making the entire kit retail at \$1897, or less with 800 Series hardware and the 8IOS pedal. If it's volume, depth, clarity, and good construction you're after, you owe it to yourself to seriously check out the *Extenders*.



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